

The Future of Early Childhood Education in the Digital Age

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peluang dan tantangan PAUD di era digital dan memprediksi masa depan eksistensi PAUD dalam kancah pendidikan nasional. Penelitian ini merupakan studi kepustakaan yang merujuk pada diskursus yang beredar dan wacana yang ditawarkan oleh para ahli maupun praktisi pendidikan anak usia dini. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa PAUD merupakan segmen pendidikan yang patut mendapat perhatian. Hal ini disebabkan 1) Adanya peluang yang terbuka bagi setiap elemen masyarakat untuk turut serta berpartisipasi dalam mendidik anak-anak sejak dini; 2) Adanya progres dalam bidang teknologi yang menjadi tantangan bagi PAUD untuk dapat eksis dan survive dalam era digital. Bahwa masa depan PAUD dalam pendidikan nasional berangkat dari upaya konkret masyarakat dalam mewujudkan pendidikan hari ini bagi anak-anak di usia dini.

Kata kunci: PAUD, Era Digital, Peluang, Tantangan

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges of PAUD in the digital era and predict the future existence of PAUD in the national education arena. This research is a literature study that refers to the outstanding discourses and discourses offered by experts and practitioners of early childhood education. The results of this study indicate that PAUD is a segment of education that deserves attention. This is due to 1) There are opportunities that are open for every element of society to participate in educating children from an early age; 2) There is progress in the field of technology which is a challenge for PAUD to exist and survive in the digital era. That the future of PAUD in national education depends from the community's concrete efforts in realizing today's education for children at an early age.

Keywords: PAUD, Digital Age, Opportunities, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Children are small human beings who have potential and abilities. The child is not an adult human being in a small form. The child is the child. In the large dictionary Indonesian child is a young human being, who is only six years old. Whether a nation advances in the future, is determined by the children who are currently raised by parents, teachers, and the environment. Therefore, children need to be protected, nurtured, and educated as best as possible.

The National for the Educational of Young Children (NAEYC) defines early childhood education as one that serves children born up to 8 years of age for half-day or full activities, whether at home or outside institutions. (DeVries, R., Zan, B., Hildebrandt, C., Edmiaston, R., & Sales, 2002). The Association of Educators based in America defines the age range based on the development of research results in the field of child developmental psychology which indicates that there is a general pattern that can be predicted regarding development that occurs during the first 8 years of a child's life. NAEYC also acts as an institution that provides guidance in maintaining the quality of quality early childhood learning programs, namely programs that are in accordance with the level of development and uniqueness of the individual. (Suryana, 2018).

One of the competencies and characters that must be possessed by teachers is the ability to adapt to the times. (Sumantri, 2019). This competence is absolutely for teachers, especially ECE teachers because the first education obtained by early childhood will be the foundation and basis for children's development in the future.

Children of kindergarten age are in the age range of 4-6 years. In the SISDIKNAS Law No. 20 of 2003 in Chapter VI Article 28, it is explained that kindergarten is a formal education on the early childhood education path that educates children aged 4-6 years. (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, 2006). The purpose of kindergarten education is to help lay the foundation in the direction of the development of attitudes, behaviors, recognition, skills, and creativity necessary for the child in growth as well as subsequent development. In their growth and development, kindergarten-age children always follow the rhythm of their development. At this age period, it is also called the *golden age*. (Suri, D., & Chandra, 2021)

Early childhood is the golden age of a child, at this time the child's brain development is at a peak that can support growth and development in various aspects both cognitive, physical, motor, social and emotional. At this time, there is also the laying of the foundations of personality which will become a milestone of self-identity when the child grows up. So it can be said that early childhood is a period of character building for a child. (Arriani, 2019)

In religious terminology, learning actually begins as a child. Some even interpret learning as having begun since before a child has not been born, that is, it begins with the search for seeds, weight, and religion of his parents. This confirms that learning is something very important in this life. The urgency of this education will continue to develop following the changing situation of the times. As a reality, the advancement of the information technology world today brings us to an all-digital era. This reality touches almost all elements of education, from early childhood education (read; ECE) up to the level of higher education. This period is also often referred to as the disruptive era, where it is characterized by the emergence of various disorders and the many changes that occur in society, including changes in behavior that occur in children on a daily basis. (Maulidiyah, 2018)

The development of the internet-based digital world is currently very massive. (Kiani, 1998; Van Puyvelde, H., Basto, M., Chung, A. S. J., & Van Bruwaene, 2020). This is corroborated by the fact that a study conducted in Surabaya on children aged 6-12 years found that the respondents who used the internet the most were the first age of 8 years (27%). Another very interesting fact is that among the respondents admitted that they have known the internet since toddlers, namely from the age of 5 years (12%), age 4 years (4%) and age 3 years (1%) (Puspita, 2013). This of course must be considered by parents, because there are other facts that say that in addition to looking for information, children aged 10-14 years often watch videos, one of which is on the You Tube site which produces extraordinary achievements, namely for 12 years no less than 300 million videos are uploaded every minute with the number of viewers reaching

2 billion per month. In addition, social media is the most frequently accessed type of internet content, reaching 97.4% or 129.2 million users. (Sukmanjaya, 2017).

The results of the above research should be of concern to ECE organizing institutions. In this regard, of course, ECE schools need to develop a curriculum that is in accordance with the above conditions. At home, the management of the use of such media is the responsibility of parents, where necessary. Therefore, one of the main policies for the development of national education is to improve quality with the relevance of education. (Garvis, S., & Taguchi, 2021; James, B. C., Chassin, M. R., Goldberg, H. I., King, J. G., & Todd, 1993). In addition, the expansion and equitable distribution of education and accountability are also national development policies. The role of education in ECE in this era of globalization is very important in shaping the character of children who are moral and have a noble, creative, innovative, and competitive character. Education in Early Childhood is not just about increasing knowledge and abilities related to the scientific field but rather in preparing children to be able to master various challenges in the future. (Husain, Rusmin, 2020)

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is not a process of filling the brain with as much information as possible, but rather the process of cultivating, cultivating, motivating and providing an environment that allows children to develop their potential as optimally as possible. For this reason, managers and educators in Early Childhood Education are required to always explore, add and improve knowledge and skills, because early childhood educators act as facilitators in developing student potential. Early Childhood Education is not a process of filling the brain with as much information as possible, but rather the process of cultivating, cultivating, motivating and providing an environment that allows children to develop their potential as optimally as possible. (Husain, Rusmin, 2020)

This ECE problem should not be ignored, given that from an early age value cultivation must be carried out. (Ananda, 2017). The root of the problem in educating children today is how to arouse the motivation of early childhood to be aware of the importance of learning. Among the reasons for the decline in children's learning motivation is the use of smartphones that do not match their needs. Early childhood is very familiar with *smartphones*, they easily access something that is not beneficial for a child their age, such as game play, entertainment, and social media.

On the other hand, the educational model of today's children must keep up with the existing times. (Dewia, E. R., & Alam, 2020; Ebbeck, M. A., Ebbeck, M., & Waniganayake, 2002). Digital technology that is so sophisticated can synchronize the changes in educational patterns carried out so that it can regulate several patterns such as authoritarian, democratic, and

permissive to be more controlled. This paper tries to describe various problems faced for early childhood education and offers various theoretical solutions based on studies from various existing literature sources. By photographing various existing sources, this paper contributes to the renewal of various parties related to ECE, especially parents and early education institutions.

John Dewey studied the world of education and became one of the experts who always provided renewal movements in the world of education. (Quay, J., & Seaman, 2013). There are several opinions of Dewey in making a great contribution to education in kindergarten, (Fernandez, 2014) namely: a) Education should be centered on the child. Its meaning, the focus in the learning process lies in the needs of the child, the development, and the process he is undergoing. Educators are seen as active facilitators in encouraging and developing the potential that exists in children; b) Education should be active and interactive. This means that the educational process should take place both ways. The existence of communication between educators and children is an important factor in realizing the program of activities and achieving educational goals. Here the child is the subject of education and is no longer an object of education, which means that both educators and children are then communicating and carrying out is active; c) Education should involve the social environment of the child or the community in which he is located. That is, the educational process takes place well if there is good cooperation between the parents, children, and surrounding environments. In addition. A number of examples of activity programs given should reflect the daily life of the child, so that it is easy to understand and in the application on a daily basis. (Sahertian, 2019)

The urgency of this study is that the opportunities and challenges of ECE in the digital era should receive a positive response, and the existence of ECE today is a steppingstone for the development and progress of ECE in the future, especially in welcoming ECE competition in the national education arena.

In the history of the development of *Early Childhood Education* there are several names as philosophers in children's education. (Yus, 2011). Their thoughts and ideas are still being used as a reference to develop ECE implementation, including the implementation of ECE in Indonesia.

Previous studies have stated that the "Professionalism of ECE Teachers in the Digital Age" confirms that to obtain the results of the formation of quality children should be supported by professional teachers. ECE teachers are professional educators with the main emphasis on educating, guiding, directing, training, assessing, evaluating and having a strong scientific foundation on child development. (Nurhamidah, N., & Nurhafizah, 2019). ECE teachers in this digital era are professionals who need various requirements that ensure that their profession can

be implemented properly. Meanwhile, "Language Learning in the Digital Era at the Early Childhood Education Level" which states that teachers and parents must understand strategies to develop children's language skills. In the era of revolution 4.0 which prioritizes technology, teachers are expected to be able to utilize technology as a learning medium. A kindergarten and early childhood teacher must be able to utilize technology in providing language learning for early childhood. (Herlina, n.d.).

In "Informational Literacy Competence of Early Childhood Teachers in Era 4.0: Between Demands and Reality" it is stated that teachers in the 4.0 era mean teachers in the era of the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution is characterized by the speed of access to digital information. From this condition, the demands of being a teacher in the 4.0 era are required to have digital information literacy competencies. This literacy is characterized by the ability to process and search for data digitally. However, these demands did not go smoothly with the existing reality. There are still many teachers who do not have digital information literacy, especially Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers. This is the initial data as the basis for the implementation of Community Service (PPM) activities. This PPM is carried out on ECE teachers who are members of the Cluster Activity Center (PKG) organization. (Amilia, 2019).

Currently, it is entering an era of disruption that has the characteristics of automation and the digital economy, characterized by the emergence of smart robots, super computers (*big data*). (Schwab, 2017; Sturgeon, 2021). Changes in technology and information and communication have driven change in various sectors including education. The role of the teacher cannot be replaced by no matter how sophisticated the technology is used, it is still in the formation of character, early childhood morals and socializing requires the help of a professional teacher. (Hartuti, 2021)

In "ECE Investment in Reducing Crime in the Digital Age," that this study seeks to a) illustrate the digital revolution that affects the pattern and quality of early childhood learning; b) examine the conception of ECE investment policies in government policy; c) the role of ECE in support development interest and talent children to support the 2030 demographic bonus in the digital age, and d) reduce disadvantaged children to avoid becoming perpetrators of crime now and in the future. This context should be a highlight for Early Childhood Education Institutions (ECE) from policy to praxis on the ground to transform as early as possible. (Ivan, 2019)

The education provided in early childhood aims to facilitate the overall growth and development of the child and emphasizes the development of all aspects of the child's

development, namely moral and religious, physical motor, cognitive, social emotional, language, and art. (Feeney, S., Moravcik, E., Nolte, S., & Christensen, 1996; Sheridan, S. M., Edwards, C. P., Marvin, C. A., & Knoche, 2009). Education in early childhood is provided by parents, and educators include the process of care, upbringing, and education in the child by creating a pleasant environment for the child in which the child can explore an environment that gives the child the opportunity to know, and understand the learning experiences he has gained from the environment by observing, imitating, experimenting that takes place repeatedly and involves the entire potential and intelligence of the child.

This research aims to answer two questions: What are the opportunities and challenges of ECE in the digital age; How to predict the future of ECE in the national education scene.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research belongs to the category of literature study research types. The research was carried out by trying to explore, explore, and analyze theoretical references that are relevant to the case or problem raised, namely the future of ECE in the digital era.

According to Creswell, a literature study is a written summary of articles from journals, books, and other documents that describe theories and information both past and current organizing the library into the topics and documents needed. (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2016; Creswell, 1999, 2016)

In the line with the above definition that literature study is a method used to collect data from various reference sources related to the topic understudy, namely the future of ECE in the digital era. Literature studies can be obtained through various sources, both journal articles, books on this topic, the internet, and libraries.

Data analysis is the decomposition of the data obtained to create conclusions. The data analysis used in this study is content *analysis* which is a research procedure carried out on data documented in recordings, both images, sounds, notes, or other forms of recordings. (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, 2005). Furthermore, it is tried to understand in a descriptive way, namely by providing an overview and understanding and explanation related to the information that has been collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Early childhood education (PAUD) based on the Minister of Education and Culture Number 146 of 2014 Article 1 concerning the 2013 Curriculum, that Early Childhood

Education is a level of education before the basic education level as a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six years is carried out through the provision of educational stimulus to help children grow and develop both physical aspects and spiritual so as to have readiness to enter further education. (Apriyanti, 2017)

Early childhood education plays a very important and decisive role in the history of children's further development because early childhood education is the foundation for a child's personality. Children who receive coaching from an early age will be able to improve their physical and mental health and well-being which will have an impact on improving learning achievement, work ethic, and productivity. In the end, children will be better able to be independent and optimize their potential. (Susanto, 2021)

Early childhood education is also used as a mirror to see children's success in the future. (Yuliariatiningsih, M. S., & Setiaty, 2012). Children who get good services from an early age have greater hopes of achieving success in the future. On the contrary, children who do not get adequate educational services need an uphill struggle to develop the next life.

1. PAUD *vis a vis* Digital Age

ECE is an educational tool for early childhood to obtain educational rights according to their age. Early childhood also has the chance to learn and play, according to their interests and talents – without any element of coercion or pressure.

Learning in Early Childhood in the past shows that there are conventional efforts related to learning by paying attention to their potential. In essence, children learn while playing, therefore learning in early childhood is basically play. In accordance with the characteristics of early childhood who are active in carrying out various explorations of their environment, play activities are part of the learning process. For this reason, learning at an early age must be designed so that children feel unencumbered in achieving their developmental tasks. The learning process carried out must depart from what the child has. Each child brings all the knowledge he has to new experiences. (Hani, 2019)

Early childhood education can create new patterns in teaching, training, and educating children with a variety of existing media, along with the very rapid development in the field of technology. Educators in ECE can select and sort out what media and content are appropriate for children's education in ECE –with due regard to ethics, values, and religious foundations.

The digital era has invited ECE educators and observers to continue to work and innovate in the field of learning by utilizing social media and others. In fact, they can fill those spaces with educational content and in accordance with the themes that are the main menu of early childhood education.

2. ECE Existence, Opportunities and Challenges

It must be admitted that technological advances require children to be able to take advantage of the facilities provided by this digital era. The urgency is for students to become superior resources who can compete and develop with their times. This is proven by the challenges in the world of education, including the process of educating children in the digital era like now towards the cultivation of educational values itself which actually still needs to be developed. (Dini, 2022). Value education is aimed at shaping the character or value that exists in students so that they are expected to become human beings who can maintain their dignity and dignity well. (Feather, 1975; Peters, 2010). But in reality, the rapid flow of technology in the digital era actually makes children carried away by the current, triggering an attitude of unwillingness to take responsibility, moral degradation, and an increase in crime cases among students. (Faiza, A., & Firda, 2018). This happens because of the wide-open access to information and communication using technology through online social media *pages*. This is a common problem that occurs, so that students focus more on this technology circle than studying. Complex problems like this certainly affect the process of early childhood education.

On the other hand, the ease of existing digital facilities provides opportunities for children to find and get information that is sometimes not controlled by parents. This often has an impact on several things, including children's knowledge of the internet is smarter than that of parents; ease of internet access; freely connected without rules; ease of creating content in cyberspace; the child wants freedom.

In the school environment, there are also effects from this era such as the lack of motivation of children. (Katz, I., Assor, A., & Kanat-Maymon, 2008; McGee, 2013). The motivation that is expected to thrive in schools is weakened due to interference from digital devices such as *smartphones*. In this digital era, the world of education is faced with significant changes. This should actually be used by educational institutions as a way to improve the quality of existing education, including the use of learning devices such as *smartphones*. (Dewi, A. K., Hasanuddin Manurung, M. P. K., Agus Yulistiyono, S. E., Ariningsih, K. A., Wulandari, R. W., Ali Rifan, M. P. I., & Harahap, 2021)

The problem of educating children seems to also occur in the home, especially in the digital era which turns out to break down the communal function in a family. Most parents now provide facilities in the form of *smartphones* to their children so that the child becomes calm or not fussy when the parents are busy. (Dini, 2022). Without realizing that children's responsibility to digital still needs to be supervised. Parents should limit the child in terms of the use of digital devices and try to shift it to learning or establish the responsibility of learning independently at home. Basically, children also cannot be selective in choosing the right media for their age. (Harris, P. L., & Corriveau, 2011; Marsh, 2016). So, this is where the role of parents to be supervisors for children is important so that the negative impact of the digital era, especially those that occur in the family environment, (Flinn, M. V., & England, 1995; Nisbet, 1953; Segrin, C., Givertz, M., Swaitkowski, P., & Montgomery, 2015), can be avoided. However, most parents are now busy at work and seem to be less concerned about the child's educational process in the family, this of course has a fairly serious impact on the child's learning process because parental upbringing is a major milestone of the child's success in education. (Hakim, 2020)

The problem that often occurs in the surrounding environment is that students are too busy with their gadgets so that they forget about social relationships with other people. Where the environment should serve to educate children so that they can live socially and socially actively with and without technology because the environment consists of materials and stimuli that are physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural. (Rahmat, 2018). This is the homework for the surrounding environment to create and restore the communal function of children to the surrounding environment, including socializing with their peers so that motivation to learn grows. The growth of motivation in the child also affects the optimization of aspects of the child's development. (Maslow, 1955; Robins, 2012). Giving *rewards* has a positive influence on aspects of early childhood development, this is because children tend to behave in accordance with social expectations if the teacher gives *rewards* / gifts which are things that children like. Giving *rewards* can provide a stimulus to children to try to obtain their desires so that indirectly this will affect their development. (Agustina, M., Azizah, E. N., & Koesmadi, 2021). This kind of attitude cannot necessarily arise without encouragement from themselves and their social environment, especially in the process of forming student learning motivation. (Dini, 2022). One way that can be done is to take advantage of technology in this digital age to achieve that goal, such as creating a guided learning group for children of the same age. This is a form of stimulus from the social environment to children's education in the era of digital technology as it is today.

CONCLUSION

In the digital age, the opportunity for ECE to continue to grow and develop is very important in the world of education. Therefore, education for early childhood is vital for the preparation of a strong generation and character in the future. However, it should be realized that the challenges of ECE are also severe, both from the ability to be competitive with similar education, the ability to adapt to developments, and the power of innovation in maintaining the survival of institutions.

In the national education scene, ECE has a special space and receives the attention of policy makers. The existence of ECE will support the continuity and acceleration of education which is continuously fought by the government for improvement and improvement.

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